New York Consolidated Laws, Labor Law - LAB § 201-d. Discrimination against the engagement in certain activities

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1. Definitions. As used in this section:

a. "Political activities" shall mean (i) running for public office, (ii) campaigning for a candidate for public office, or (iii) participating in fund-raising activities for the benefit of a candidate, political party or political advocacy group;

b. "Recreational activities" shall mean any lawful, leisure-time activity, for which the employee receives no compensation and which is generally engaged in for recreational purposes, including but not limited to sports, games, hobbies, exercise, reading and the viewing of television, movies and similar material;

c. "Work hours" shall mean, for purposes of this section, all time, including paid and unpaid breaks and meal periods, that the employee is suffered, permitted or expected to be engaged in work, and all time the employee is actually engaged in work. This definition shall not be referred to in determining hours worked for which an employee is entitled to compensation under any law including article nineteen of this chapter;

d. "Political matters" shall mean matters relating to elections for political office, political parties, legislation, regulation and the decision to join or support any political party or political, civic, community, fraternal or labor organization;

e. "Religious matters" shall mean matters relating to religious affiliation and practice and the decision to join or support any religious organization or association.

2. Unless otherwise provided by law, it shall be unlawful for any employer or employment agency to refuse to hire, employ or license, or to discharge from employment or otherwise discriminate against an individual in compensation, promotion or terms, conditions or privileges of employment because of:

a. an individual's political activities outside of working hours, off of the employer's premises and without use of the employer's equipment or other property, if such activities are legal, provided, however, that this paragraph shall not apply to persons whose employment is defined in paragraph six of subdivision (a) of section seventy-nine-h of the civil rights law, and provided further that this paragraph shall not apply to persons who would otherwise be prohibited from engaging in political activity pursuant to chapter 15 of title 5 and subchapter III of chapter 73 of title 5 of the USCA;

b. an individual's legal use of consumable products, including cannabis in accordance with state law, prior to the beginning or after the conclusion of the employee's work hours, and off of the employer's premises and without use of the employer's equipment or other property;

c. an individual's legal recreational activities, including cannabis in accordance with state law, outside work hours, off of the employer's premises and without use of the employer's equipment or other property;

d. an individual's membership in a union or any exercise of rights granted under Title 29, USCA, Chapter 7 or under article fourteen of the civil service law; or

e. an individual's refusal to: (i) attend an employer-sponsored meeting with the employer or its agent, representative or designee, the primary purpose of which is to communicate the employer's opinion concerning religious or political matters; or (ii) listen to speech or view communications, the primary purpose of which is to communicate the employer's opinion concerning religious or political matters.

3. The provisions of subdivision two of this section shall not be deemed to protect activity which:

a. creates a material conflict of interest related to the employer's trade secrets, proprietary information or other proprietary or business interest;

b. with respect to employees of a state agency as defined in sections seventy-three and seventy-four of the public officers law respectively, is in knowing violation of subdivision two, three, four, five, seven, eight or twelve of section seventy-three or of section seventy-four of the public officers law, or of any executive order, policy, directive, or other rule which has been issued by the attorney general regulating outside employment or activities that could conflict with employees' performance of their official duties;

c. with respect to employees of any employer as defined in section twenty-seven-a of this chapter, is in knowing violation of a provision of a collective bargaining agreement concerning ethics, conflicts of interest, potential conflicts of interest, or the proper discharge of official duties;

d. with respect to employees of any employer as defined in section twenty-seven-a of this chapter who are not subject to section seventy-three or seventy-four of the public officers law, is in knowing

violation of article eighteen of the general municipal law or any local law, administrative code provision, charter provision or rule or directive of the mayor or any agency head of a city having a population of one million or more, where such law, code provision, charter provision, rule or directive concerns ethics, conflicts of interest, potential conflicts of interest, or the proper discharge of official duties and otherwise covers such employees; and

e. with respect to employees other than those of any employer as defined in section twenty-seven-a of this chapter, violates a collective bargaining agreement or a certified or licensed professional's contractual obligation to devote his or her entire compensated working hours to a single employer, provided however that the provisions of this paragraph shall apply only to professionals whose compensation is at least fifty thousand dollars for the year nineteen hundred ninety-two and in subsequent years is an equivalent amount adjusted by the same percentage as the annual increase or decrease in the consumer price index.

4. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision three of this section, an employer shall not be in violation of this section where the employer takes action based on the belief either that: (i) the employer's actions were required by statute, regulation, ordinance or other governmental mandate, (ii) the employer's actions were permissible pursuant to an established substance abuse or alcohol program or workplace policy, professional contract or collective bargaining agreement, or (iii) the individual's actions were deemed by an employer or previous employer to be illegal or to constitute habitually poor performance, incompetency or misconduct.

4-a. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision three or four of this section, an employer shall not be in violation of this section where the employer takes action related to the use of cannabis based on the following:

(i) the employer's actions were required by state or federal statute, regulation, ordinance, or other state or federal governmental mandate;

(ii) the employee is impaired by the use of cannabis, meaning the employee manifests specific articulable symptoms while working that decrease or lessen the employee's performance of the duties or tasks of the employee's job position, or such specific articulable symptoms interfere with an employer's obligation to provide a safe and healthy work place, free from recognized hazards, as required by state and federal occupational safety and health law; or

(iii) the employer's actions would require such employer to commit any act that would cause the employer to be in violation of federal law or would result in the loss of a federal contract or federal funding.

5. Nothing in this section shall apply to persons who, on an individual basis, have a professional service contract with an employer and the unique nature of the services provided is such that the employer shall be permitted, as part of such professional service contract, to limit the off-duty activities which may be engaged in by such individual.

6. Nothing in this section shall prohibit an organization or employer from offering, imposing or having in effect a health, disability or life insurance policy that makes distinctions between employees for the type of coverage or the price of coverage based upon the employees' recreational activities or use of consumable products, provided that differential premium rates charged employees reflect a differential cost to the employer and that employers provide employees with a statement delineating the differential rates used by the carriers providing insurance for the employer, and provided further that such distinctions in type or price of coverage shall not be utilized to expand, limit or curtail the rights or liabilities of any party with regard to a civil cause of action.

7. a. Where a violation of this section is alleged to have occurred, the attorney general may apply in the name of the people of the state of New York for an order enjoining or restraining the commission or continuance of the alleged unlawful acts. In any such proceeding, the court may impose a civil penalty in the amount of three hundred dollars for the first violation and five hundred dollars for each subsequent violation.

b. In addition to any other penalties or actions otherwise applicable pursuant to this chapter, where a violation of this section is alleged to have occurred, an aggrieved individual may commence an action for equitable relief and damages.

8. Nothing in this section shall prohibit: (i) an employer or its agent, representative or designee from communicating to its employees any information that the employer is required by law to communicate, but only to the extent of such legal requirement; (ii) an employer or its agent, representative or designee from communicating to its employees any information that is necessary for such employees to perform their job duties; (iii) an institution of higher education, or any agent, representative or designee of such institution, from meeting with or participating in any communications with its employees that are part of coursework, any symposia or an academic program at such institution; (iv) casual conversations between employees or between an employee and an agent, representative or designee of an employer, provided participation in such conversations is not required; or (v) a requirement limited to the employer's managerial and supervisory employees.

9. The provisions of this section shall not apply to a religious corporation, entity, association, educational institution or society that is exempt from the requirements of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 pursuant to 42 USC 2000e-1(a) with respect to speech on religious matters to employees

who perform work connected with the activities undertaken by such religious corporation, entity, association, educational institution or society.

10. Every employer shall post a sign in every workplace at the location or locations where notices to employees are normally posted, to inform employees of their rights pursuant to this section.

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